

OXFORD RESEARCH IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

**ABSTRACTS OF THESES
IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
FOR WHICH HIGHER DEGREES WERE AWARDED
BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IN 1993**

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CLAIRE E. ALEXANDER, *The Art of 'Being Black': The Creation of Black British Youth Identities.* D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5499)

Black youth is perhaps one of the most studied and controversial social categories of recent years. Earlier studies have, however, largely tended to adopt a 'problem oriented' approach to issues of black identity, in which black youth are seen as culturally confused, 'alienated' and outside the bounds of British society. Such works have portrayed black culture as fixed and static, passive in the face of external ascription and powerless to generate alternatives.

This study moves away from earlier, external definitions of black identity to consider how black youths define themselves. It contends that many black youths are involved in an ongoing and dynamic process of identity construction and negotiation, which assumes significance in interaction with others. At the level of lived experience, black identity is created and recreated from a range of sources and cultural options; it changes over time and according to individual choice.

The research is based upon the experiences and attitudes of a small number of black British youths in London. Using material gleaned from twelve months' fieldwork and interviews, the study seeks to place black youths as 'actors' at the

centre of any discussion of black British identity. This approach recognizes that, at 'street-level', black youth play an active and creative role in the construction of their image and expression. Black British culture thus becomes a primary site for contestation, which challenges the traditional certainties of 'race' and of an imagined national identity.

VASSILIKI CHRYSANTHOPOULOU, *The Construction of Ethnic Identity among the Castellorizian Greeks of Perth, Australia*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-8450)

Perth, the capital of Western Australia, is home for about 4,000 to 7,000 migrants and their Australian-born descendants originating from Castellorizo, a Greek island between Rhodes and Cyprus, in the eastern Mediterranean. The Castellorizians, who migrated to Perth and other parts of Australia between 1900 and 1950 by chain migration, constitute a large and powerful segment of the Greek community of Perth.

The scope of this thesis, for which fieldwork was undertaken between 1984 and 1986, is to investigate the construction, maintenance and transmission of ethnic identity among community-affiliated Castellorizians, namely among those who chose to maintain their ethnic identity in the context of the Castellorizian and broader Greek community of Perth. Two fundamental aspects of their identity are examined in particular. First, how Castellorizians construct and maintain a sense of uniqueness and superiority *vis-à-vis* non-Castellorizians who constitute their milieu. Second, changes in Castellorizian identity over time and between generations. Since this is a study of people whose world has been restructured many times during a period extending to at least four generations, the perspective adopted is dynamic, and Castellorizian identity is presented as long-term, ever changing and open-ended.

A number of mechanisms of maintenance of identity have been identified in the areas of socio-economic adaptation, community and church politics and wedding rituals. Firstly, Castellorizian identity is structured and perpetuated in segmentary fashion: Castellorizians project their regional Greek, pan-hellenic or Australian belonging according to the social and ideological context of interaction. Secondly, they use their past creatively and selectively to justify and authenticate their needs at present. They believe that their success in business and their prominent position in the Greek and broader, Australian community, are proof of the continuity of a tradition established on Castellorizo. Thirdly, Castellorizians interpret their political and economic power as moral excellence, thus justifying their attempts to maintain prevalence in the Greek community on primordial grounds. Fourthly, there are systematic differences in the ways in which Castellorizians of different generation, age, gender and socio-economic status perceive and express their sense of belonging. Young Castellorizians negotiate values, practices and symbols transmitted to them by their parents and grandparents according to their own needs and ideas. Finally, the existence of an élite, the

members of which present themselves as exemplars of Castellorizian tradition, constitutes a powerful symbol of identification for Castellorizians and becomes a boundary of their identity.

EVI IOANNI CONSTANTINIDOU, *Local History and Identity in a Coastal Village in East Sutherland, Scotland: A Social Anthropological Study*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-8451)

This is a social anthropological study of Embo, a village in south-east Sutherland. The emphasis is on the relationship between competing historical discourses about a particular locality and the experiences of its residents. In Chapter 1 Highland history (especially the period of the Clearances) is examined in order to set a context for the ethnography of Embo. Embo's regional landscape is described with special emphasis on its 'lived features'.

Chapter 2 examines the local texts and processes through which local historiography generates the locality's distinct historicism. Embo is shown to have a different historicism to Dornoch, the historical centre of the parish. In Chapter 3 the fishing past of Embo is shown to be enshrined in an 'oral genre'—a 'genre of life'. The history of the herring fishing and the stories of the fishergirls of Embo provide an ethnographic canvas for the discussion.

Chapter 4 explores the extent to which Embo's traditions have been determined, respectively, by a local writer and by an outsider. The questions raised by the development of Grannie's Heilan' Hame—a tourist caravan park—are addressed. The discussion shows that the perception of veracity of the past and future of a particular group is important in understanding people's experience of change.

Chapter 5 discusses the 'local' relevance of a language shift from Gaelic to English. Language death in Embo is shown to be the domain of competing and ambiguous definitions, imposed by the 'public' life of a language and the 'private' choice and experience behind it. It is argued that during the language death and its academic documentation there has been a parameter collapse which has important repercussions on the historical discourse of the Embos.

Chapter 6 is a detailed description of a series of fundraising events centred around an Independent State of Embo. The relationship between these events and local and extra-local interpretations is examined. The chapter illustrates the internal and external dimensions of the event, and shows that the two can be ethnographically described contemporaneously. It also includes a discussion of the problems of analysis of 'events' and 'symbols' in anthropological studies of Great Britain.

MARIE-BÉNÉDICTE DEMBOUR, *The Memory of Colonialism: Meetings with Former Colonial Officers of the Belgian Congo*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-8452)

The thesis, based on in-depth interviews with former colonial officers, explores the way in which colonialism is talked about and remembered in present-day Belgium.

It does not seek to reconstruct past colonial experiences as such. Rather it is concerned with present memories of colonialism. Two such memories are contrasted: on the one hand, that held by the interviewees, former *territoriaux* of the Belgian Congo, which stresses the dedication and effort of development at the heart of the colonial project; on the other, that of 'leftist' circles, to which the interviewer associated herself, which equate colonialism with oppression. These conflicting memories raise the question of the nature of the encounter of interviewees and interviewer. Were they able to 'understand' each other? The thesis probes the answer to this question.

The first two chapters examine the motivations, preconceptions, aims and expectations of both the interviewer and the interviewees regarding the research-project. The third chapter pays attention to complex processes which influenced what was actually said during the interviews. In particular, it stresses that memories are organized in function of present needs. The fourth chapter provides an analysis, by the anthropologist, of fundamental contradictions in the *territorial* discourse, which reveals the pervasiveness of domination within the relationships between the *territoriaux* and the Africans. The final chapter presents the criticisms which an informant addressed towards the work, exemplified by his comment that the thesis does not convey the 'ordinary' character of colonial practice.

The dialogical approach of the thesis highlights the way in which the anthropologist and her best informant hold irreconcilable viewpoints on colonialism and are engaged in an on-going debate. Its reflexive perspective invites the reader to follow the trajectory of the author, from near-certainties to dilemmas and doubts. Its overall aim is to illuminate the moral complexity of colonialism and to address the problematic issue of the establishment of knowledge in anthropology.

JULIA D. HARRISON, *An Institution in Transition: An Ethnography of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5490)

This thesis is an institutional ethnography of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in 1991. The museum, which is located in Honolulu, Hawaii, is the State Museum of Natural and Cultural History and holds major collections of the natural and cultural heritage of Hawaii and other Pacific islands. In 1991 it was an institution in transition, changing from an inwardly focused research centre to a more publicly oriented museum. The mechanics of this process of change constituted the focus of my study.

I found an intense conflict between two discourses in the museum. One I have called *the traditionalist ethos* and the other *the new order paradigm*. Adherents of the former wanted to build on the what the museum had always been, as they saw it: a Pacific research centre and an institution with strong links to Hawaii and the Pacific. The latter wanted to turn the museum into a 'people' place, bringing the world to Hawaii while at the same time operating in an entrepreneurial manner. The new order paradigm was introduced into the museum in 1984 when a new director was appointed to the museum. He came to the museum following a twenty-six year career at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. His 'new' ideas were symbolic of the multitude of outside influences that have challenged a distinctive island identity over the last two hundred years. Response to the outside world from those who call Hawaii home has always been characterized by a certain degree of ambivalence. They experienced a sense of diminishing control over what the destiny of the Hawaiian islands is to be. These attitudes were reflected among the traditionalists at the Bishop Museum, and they generated an intensely emotional response to the processes of change happening in 1991.

I developed a model of change which drew on the work, among others, of Sahlins and Thomas. The model incorporated Sahlins's ideas of the past being part of the present through the reproduction and the transformation of structure, and Thomas's recognition of the distinctiveness of the Pacific island experience, the indigenous processes of change, and the extended time frames that must be part of any model of change. Ideas of tradition and emotion further informed my study.

I concluded that in the implementation of change at the Bishop Museum only processes which allowed for the institutions's 'Hawaiianess' to be carried forward and which encouraged heterogeneity in its organizational discourses would be ultimately successful.

A. R. HART, *Purchasing Power? An Ethnographic Study of Men who Buy Sex in Alicante, Spain*. D.Phil. Restricted until 23 November 1998. (BLLD 43-5491)

Abstract not available at time of going to press.

HENRY MABLEY JOHNSON, *The Symbolism of the koto: An Ethnomusicology of the Form and Function of a Traditional Japanese Musical Instrument*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5204)

The Japanese musical instrument, the *koto*, is examined in order to illustrate the many ways that it signifies meaning as a traditional object of material culture. Through a study of the interrelationship between the object, its transmission, and its symbolism, the analysis discusses the signification of the *koto*'s form and function together with its general meaning in its broader socio-cultural context.

The objective of this thesis is to show that an examination of these very often neglected areas of ethnomusicology does help in the understanding of musical instruments, music, and culture. It is argued that the music sound itself should not always be seen as a unique entity that has no relationship with the human behaviour that produces it.

The discussion falls into three main parts (object, performance, and music) in order to emphasize that the study of the symbolism of a musical instrument should also consider the object (the form of the instrument) and its function (to play music in performance). Following an introductory chapter, Chapters 2–8 primarily examine the aesthetics of the *koto* as an object of material culture in order to establish the form, function, and meaning of its signifying features (its symbolism). It is shown that a historical survey is essential to understanding the classification of the instrument in Japan. In Chapter 9, the *koto* is studied in its performance context. Here, the playing of music is seen as the primary function of the instrument and therefore one of the main ways by which meanings concerning the *koto* are transmitted. In Chapter 10, the last main part before the conclusion, an emphasis is placed on the interrelationship between the *koto* and the sound (the music) that it produces and the historical influences that music has on helping to establish a traditional form of instrument. The means of social production and the relationship between the performer, the instrument, and stereotypical patterns that are an inherent part of *koto* music, are examined in connection with cultural meaning that is embodied in the performance event.

D. V. L. MACLEOD, *Change in a Canary Island Fishing Settlement, with Reference to the Influence of Tourism*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5369)

This thesis examines a fishing settlement which has recently experienced a rapid growth in tourism. The main focus is upon change, and how the indigenous inhabitants have been influenced by the tourists that visit their island. I argue that a specific type of tourism, backpacking, has a broad and deep influence on the settlement, and show this through examining different aspects of people's lives. Throughout the thesis I use the concept of the 'role' as one means of appreciating change occurring among the people in the context of social interaction, and I emphasize that they are themselves agents of change. A major problem relating to change is tackled when I examine the relationship between the agent and the system in terms of subjectivity and objectivity, which I argue are not oppositional qualities but different perspectives on the same continuum. I also take a historical look at the settlement, indicating that transformation has been happening throughout its existence, thereby placing current events into a temporal perspective.

There are three main parts to the thesis, which may be summarised as: (I) a general introduction to the region, examining the physical environment, history, economic change, livelihoods and political events; (II) a look at the domestic and social life of the indigenous population, focusing on the family, social activities,

and attitudes towards gender, marriage, identity and values; and (III) an examination of the influence of livelihoods, reviewing the history and characteristics of fishing in the settlement, showing the importance of kinship in the composition of the crew and their professional education; and focusing on tourism, enlarging upon points which have been made throughout the thesis and examining the types of tourist that visit the region.

GNANA PRAKASAM, *Satnamis: The Changing Status of a Scheduled Caste in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5494)

This is an ethnographic study of Satnamis, a Scheduled or Harijan or Untouchable caste of India. The data come mainly from my fieldwork among the Satnamis of Amsena village in the Chhattisgarh region of Madhya Pradesh, Central India. As an ethnography, and set in a historical and structural framework, the thesis describes the social organization of the Satnamis. The central argument concerns the formation of the Satnami sect, the transformation of the sect into a caste, and the internal organization of the Satnamis caste and its relationships with other castes.

Chapter One reviews the different approaches to the study of the caste system and of the Untouchables. It also describes the regional features of Chhattisgarh, and presents my reasons for studying the Satnamis. Chapter Two focuses on the Satnami Movement in Chhattisgarh. The reform movement founded by Ghasi Das in the beginning of the nineteenth century forms the basis for the contemporary culture of the Satnamis. The historical background, the movement proper, the reformer and his ideology, the leaders and followers, comparison between the Satnami movement and other movements and the relationship between caste and sect are the subject-matter of this chapter.

Chapter Three deals with the internal caste organization of the Satnamis, and how they differ from other castes in the village. Its main concern is to describe and analyse the Satnami understanding of caste and units within caste, their pattern of marriage, kinship and sectarianism. The relationships of Satnamis with non-Satnamis are investigated in Chapter Four. Particular attention is given to the structural changes that have occurred in the caste system of Amsena and their impact on the Satnamis and non-Satnamis.

A summary of the findings is provided in Chapter Five. It also presents the main argument of the thesis, namely that the separateness of Satnamis and their distinct status have resulted in Satnami 'substantialization' from the caste structure. As a corollary, and in addition to conceptualizing the caste system as a structural whole (systems of relations), my arguments in this chapter call for the conceptualization of the caste system in contemporary India, as a substantial whole (system of elements).

ANDREW RUSSELL, *The Yakha: Culture, Environment and Development in East Nepal*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5495)

This is a social anthropological study of a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, the Yakha, based in East Nepal. The field research involved was carried out from January 1989 until October 1990. To the best of my knowledge, the Yakha have never before been the subject of anthropological study, and hence this work aims at filling a void in the ethnographic and linguistic record of Nepal. A central question addressed in this regard is the extent to which the Yakha can be treated as a cultural whole. The twin problems of over-generality and over-specificity in anthropological accounts, highlighted respectively by the diversity encompassed by the term 'Yakha' and the many similarities between Yakha and neighbouring ethnic groups, are addressed.

At the same time this study is a contribution to ecological anthropology. Much anthropological work in this genre takes a materialistic, ethnocentric and overly empiricist approach to 'environment', regarding it as something with which people interact at a purely subsistence level. While not ignoring the importance of the 'natural' environment, this study argues that a wider definition should be used which allows for other analytic perspectives, and people's own perceptions, to be taken into account. Expanding our conception of 'environment' thus allows the inclusion of elements such as the household environment, spirit pantheon and the outside world.

The fieldwork conducted took place during a tumultuous period in Nepal's political history, and the ethnography records the outcome of the changes in a village community in the East. The effects of migration, education and development projects in the community observed are also discussed with a view to understanding both how the Yakha are influenced by and involved in the changing world around them.

DIMITRI TSINTJILONIS, *Death and Personhood among the Sa'dan Toraja*. D.Phil. (BLLD 43-5497)

The recent past of the Sa'dan Toraja (Sulawesi, Indonesia) has been eventful. Waves of colonial incursion and missionary activity have brought fundamental social changes to the area, but a traditional ritual framework remains nevertheless. Indeed, the significant axes of this ritual framework continue to pervade Torajan society, particularly in areas such as Buntao'.

In certain respects, the proper explication of this pervasiveness connects very closely with the debate on the notion of 'the person' as well as the nature of 'individuality', and in many ways both crystallizes and inverts the terms on which this debate has been conducted. Torajan rituals are divided into those of the 'east' and 'west': while the former concentrate on life, the latter mainly deal with death. In either case, however, they are tailored very closely not only to the treatment,

but also to the production and reproduction, of particular types of body—the ‘essence’ of a noble body, for instance, is said to be golden, whilst that of a slave is wooden.

In this context, ritual constitutes a continuous process of embodiment and disembodiment—a process bound up with the rate of particular lives (i.e. specific bodies) and the replenishment of the cosmos as a whole. The overall efficacy of this process depends on the successful replication of the organizational principles which characterize disparate forms of corporeity and distinct types of essential substance. A detailed account of the rituals of death makes manifest the significance of this diversity and frames the subsequent discussion of personhood.

Indeed, the implications of this disparity are far-reaching. As the nature of the body (noble, commoner, slave) dictates the patterns of appropriate behaviour and circumscribes the major dimensions of social (inter)action, it is corporeity that gives rise to what may be thought as person and/or self; furthermore, as corporeity is constructed in the same fashion as numerous sacred or significant spaces in the Torajan universe, it assimilates human existence to a spatial order in which it is itself subsumed as a ‘place’.

The Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth

POSTGRADUATE NETWORK

During the ASA conference in Hull it was decided to set up a UK-wide network for Ph.D. postgraduates in anthropology (and related topics), to enable contacts to be made, information to change hands, and news to be disseminated. A postgraduate directory is being compiled at the University of Edinburgh. If you wish to be included in this directory please send your name, department/university, e-mail address, qualifications, stage of study, and research interests to Joan Stead or Martin Mills (tel. (0131) 650 6655, e-mail: asa.net@ed.ac.uk).

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